

Prayer for Prisoners Program Brings Inmates, Volunteers Together

By VERONICA CLEMONS
Chronicle Staff Writer

The Prayers for Prisoners celebration, sponsored by the Forsyth County Correctional Center Prison Ministry, recently gave inmates and chaplains a chance to show appreciation to those who have supported the ministry this year.

The Forsyth Prison Ministry is a full-time, non-denominational ministry involving chaplains serving the county jail, county youth detention center and the prison unit.

Senior Chaplain Rodney Stilwell awarded certificates to those who participated in the Prayers for Prisoners program, wherein volun-

teers pray for a particular inmate who is in the program for the entire year.

The program started with about 12 people, but has grown to about 150 participants. An inmate designed the certificates.

Stilwell said the program is beneficial to the entire community.

"It increases the awareness of people who are incarcerated," he said.

"It's not just for the people and their families and the inmates and their families, we pray for the entire system."

"I'm proud to see the community unite across denominational and racial lines to do something

positive," he added.

The New Bethel Baptist Church Male Chorus provided music for the event and speakers offered words of encouragement to the audience mixed with inmates and community members.

Dennis O'Magdin, one of the speakers, told inmates he was not looking to give something to them but receive something from them. He reminded them of some citizens who had been imprisoned only to come out and be leaders, like Nelson Mandela, imprisoned for much of his adult life and now is the first black president of South Africa.

He also mentioned that Melissa Hines, held captive for 41 days by

guerillas in Cambodia, still wants to go back and finish her mission work.

"Forget about all the inequities and sufferings and rise above these things and come back into the communities and lead us," he said.

Richard Doub, an inmate, expressed his appreciation for the various prayers he has received while in prison and how prayer has helped him.

The ministry, started in 1977, is the first one in the state solely supported by the religious community.

"The business of helping people change their lives, finding forgiveness and stopping certain things is the business of the church, not the

state," Stilwell said.

Now, there are no more than 10 ministries like this one, Stilwell said. Most of them are supported by state funds.

The ministry will be seeking even more assistance from area churches to help increase staff to go along with the growing number of prison inmates.

The need for more ministries will be extremely great once the new jail is built. It will have a capacity for about 1,000 inmates.

Chaplain Sandra Thigpen said the ministry has experienced some growth already with the addition of a part-time chaplain, but the ministry is hoping he will soon become

full-time and another chaplain can join the staff.

The ministry has two target areas for this year, Stilwell said, women and young men.

Since women have entered the workforce, the number of those incarcerated has grown and the amount of young men between the ages of 18-23 has grown at an alarming rate, he added.

People can get involved in the Prayers for Prisoners program by contacting the ministry or sending a donation. Volunteers are then matched with an inmate who has requested to be a part of the prayer program.

Memorial Day Finds Veteran Reliving Wounds from Korean War

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Brown was wounded the first time during combat on a hill called Vegas.

"I woke up and found out they had taken me to 'E' Medical Hospital suffering from a concussion and lacerations on the right arm, chest, head and skull," he said. "I was also wounded in the neck."

That first incident occurred in March 1953. Brown was wounded again, this time from shell-shock, July 1953.

But Brown faced obstacles before he saw any war action. President Harry Truman had integrated the armed forces, but blacks still faced prejudice, especially in the Marine Corp. which was considered an elitist group for whites, Brown said.

"I was called a lot of names, but I stayed there and toughened it out," he said. "I had to do twice as much as whites, but I passed the tests so they couldn't throw me out."

The only friend Brown has left from his marine squad is the white doctor, "Doc" James Ferris, who brought Brown in when he was wounded the first time and stayed with him all night until he awoke from the concussion.

Ferris and Brown remain good friends and enjoy reminiscing about the war days.

"Sam is about a good a person as you're ever going to see," Ferris said. "And he was a good marine."

Brown said there were many times he thought that he might not get to come home, but the thought

of a daughter he had never seen kept him determined to return to his family.

"I told the Lord that I wasn't going to stay here, I was going home and I was going to see my newborn baby," he said. "I'm thankful because everything I've asked the Lord for he's given it to me. I said I wanted to go to the marines and I said I wanted to come home with medals. It all has come true."

In addition to the Purple Hearts, Brown received a Gold Star, a Bronze Star for Bravery, the Korean Service Medal and the United Nations Service Medal.

When the war finally ended, Brown came home a changed man; not only did he wear the scars from the wounds he suffered in combat,

he bore deep mental wounds. Wounds that led him to drink and wounds that he said cost him his family.

He did return to work at Reynolds for a few years, but in 1968 doctors labeled him totally disabled due to post-traumatic stress sustained through his injuries.

Nowadays, if he is not watching television, he goes out in his 1974 light-green Cadillac he has owned for 14 years. Many times those drives lead him to Wake Forest to participate in the cardiac program so his heart can be monitored while he walks two to three hours a day; he has had four heart attacks. Brown said he also reads his Bible and goes to church as much as he can.

A bitter taste from that war still

lingers with him. Even after receiving all those medals, being seriously wounded twice during the war and being totally disabled because of those injuries for the past 25 years, he is still fighting to get the veteran benefits he deserves.

After all I went through, fighting and being wounded, I deserve 100 percent benefits," he said.

Brown's case is in Washington, D.C., waiting among a backlog of veterans' claims to be reviewed. In addition to records from the military and doctors' reports, Brown has recently added to his evidence a signed statement by Ferris verifying Brown's injuries.

Brown said part of the reason he's probably not getting total benefits is because he didn't know any-

thing about applying for benefits.

"They didn't tell you anything," he said, "especially with me being black. I was still having headaches, but I didn't know the government would pay you for them."

Brown said he and other survivors from the Korean War suffer also because they feel unappreciated — like the government has written off that war as insignificant. But, Brown said, more people died in the Korean War than in Vietnam and he feels Korean War soldiers deserve recognition as well.

"Nearly as many of us died in the 37 months of Korea as the 10 years of Vietnam and some people today dismiss it as 'the forgotten war,'" Brown said. "But those of us who fought there have not forgotten."

Church Makes History with First Women Ordained as Deacons

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Winston-Salem 24 years ago and has been a member of Emmanuel for 18 years.

All of the women said they felt honored to be nominated and accepted as deacons.

"I feel great about it," Jenkins said. "I felt the Lord must have something more in store for me."

"It's a privilege and a humbling experience," Watkins added. "I've been chosen to do more of God's will than I've been doing."

Watkins, a nurse at Baptist Hospital who has lived in Winston

since 1960, plans to get more theological education. "I want to know more to be more equipped to handle what may come up."

Mendez said since the deacon nominations came about 18 months ago, the candidates have been reviewed, tested and recommended by deacons. A show of hands from Emmanuel members Sunday gave unanimous approval for the new deacons.

Despite the show of approval from church members, Brown said the women deacons may still have

some obstacles to face.

"We still have some barriers to overcome," she said. "A lot of men do not recognize women as deacons or ministers."

Mendez reminded the congregation of biblical women such as Phoebe and Tabitha who held offices in the church.

He also encouraged all of the new deacons to work to keep harmony in the church. "Whenever the deacons and pastor work together, it brings about greater harmony in the church," he

said "For 10 years I've been proud of us working together."

He added that all of the deacons must know what the needs of the people are so they can combat problems such as teen-age pregnancy, families breaking up and violence among young people.

The three history-makers said they are looking forward to the task as deacons.

"It's a big responsibility and an awesome task," Brown said. "Because a deacon is really a servant and you often wonder if you can live up to what will be required."

I'm thankful that the church members here had enough belief and faith to nominate me."

"I've always seen myself as a servant," Watkins added, "and if I lean and depend on God I know he will direct my path."

IN OUR SCHOOLS

Academic Scholarship

Latasha D. Barr has received a full academic scholarship to attend North Carolina Central University in Durham. She will be pursuing a major in Biology. She is a senior at North Forsyth High School and is the daughter of Lewis and Denise Barr of 5205 Sunrise Terrace, Winston-Salem.



Latasha D. Barr

Year-Round School

The last day of school for year-round school will be on June 8.

Traditional Day of School

The last day of school on the traditional calendar will be on June 9.

Author's Conference

Ibrahim Elementary School will participate in a Young Author's Conference "Writing: Your Magic Carpet Ride" on Friday at 9:15 a.m. Special guests will be Joe Yukish from Clemmons University as storyteller and the West End Chamber Orchestra Woodwind Trio.

A Learning Odyssey

The 5th grade students at Konnoak Elementary will graduate with the theme "2001 A Learning Odyssey" on June 3 at 9:30 a.m. in the auditorium. Guest speaker will be Bernard Faulk, football coach at Parkland High School. Parents, family and friends of the 5th grad students are invited to attend.

Holiday for Students

Monday will be a holiday for students and a professional day for teachers.

Handicapped Training

The Trainable Mentally Handicapped (TMH) students of Konnoak Elementary will graduate on June 7 at 1:30 p.m. in the gymnasium. Konnoak Core I students are graduating to Core II program at Jefferson Elementary. A program honoring graduates consisting of musical selections, slides presentation and presentation of certificates. The guest speaker will be Camillie Blackburn, program specialist.

Family and friends of the students, school board members, exceptional children/mentally handicapped administrators are invited to attend.

Board Meets

The Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Board of Education will meet June 2 at 6 p.m.

Cultural Diversity

Konnoak Elementary School will explore new worlds in terms of cultural diversity and celebrate authorship on "Starship Konnoak" on Friday, May 27 at 10 a.m. The celebration will involve the sharing of books, food, fellowship and voyaging to space stations that feature multicultural themes.

Parents, relatives and friends are invited.

High School Graduation

All high-school graduations will be on June 3, except for South Park, which will be on June 2.

Project Graduations

The "Project Graduation" celebration will be held at the Dixie Classic Fairgrounds for all graduating seniors on June 3.

SAT Test

On June 4, there will be SAT I and SAT II subject tests.

"In Our Schools" is a weekly calendar of events that chronicles going-ons in our local schools. If you would like your event information included send them to: "In Our Schools", The Chronicle, P.O. Box 1636, Winston-Salem, N.C., 27102. You may also fax it to 723-9173



Announcing Extended Hours.

Our Northside and Main Office banking centers are not only full-service, they're now full-time.

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